



Marine Corps Food Service

Q&A: Maj. Stanley M. Weeks, USMC,
Director, Marine Corps Food Service Program

Government Food Service: *What changes to Marine Corps foodservice operations have you seen or helped bring about in the last year, since Government Food Service's last commander's update?*

Maj. Stanley M. Weeks: A few initiatives that have come about since last year's update are: effective Oct. 1, 2006, we began the upgrade of our Marine Corps Food Management Information System (MCFMIS) from a legacy-based system to a Windows-based system. Marine Corps-wide implementation will be complete by August 2007.

On Oct. 1, 2006, we released our new Training and Readiness (T&R) Manual, which was a complete revision to the standards in which we train our marines at all levels in the Food Service and Subsistence Military Occupational Field.

We received fiscal 2007 funding and began the procurement process for the Enhanced Tray Ration Heating System (E-TRHS). The main difference between the E-TRHS and the TRHS that is the Quad-Con — the embarkation container for the TRHS — has been modified to serve dual missions of storing the TRHS with all collateral equipment and, when empty, operating as a refrigeration unit.

We received approval for the procurement of the Expeditionary Field Kitchen (EFK). The EFK will be targeted as a joint procurement with the Army's Containerized Kitchen (CK). The EFK will fill shortfalls in current capability between the Tray Ration Heating System (TRHS) and the Field Food Service System (FFSS).

GFS: *How do you believe each of these changes has improved or will improve the food service available to marines?*

Weeks: The above improvements to processes, training and equipment will increase capability resulting in a higher quality of foodservice support provided to our marines in both garrison and field environments.



Weeks

GFS: *As the Marine Corps' five-year contract with Sodexo for operations in the Continental United States (CONUS) is in its fifth year, the first of three "option" years will be coming up before long. Do you anticipate exercising the option or options? How is Sodexo doing? Has the contract been modified or revised to meet requirements? If so, what were the changes?*

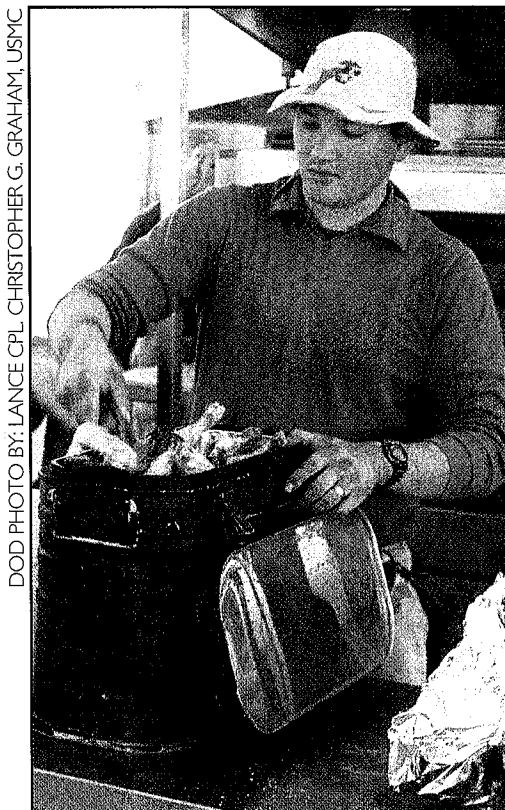
Weeks: At this point, it's premature to discuss the exercising of potential option years. However, we continue to be very pleased with the level of support we receive from our business partner, Sodexo. Time and again, they go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure our marines receive quality, nutritious meals. For example, at no additional cost, Sodexo recently served a special meal at Camp Pendleton, Calif., for the First Marine Division's 66th birthday celebration, thanking those warriors for their recent combat service. As for contract modifications, we are currently phasing in a totally re-vamped CONUS-wide Master Menu, collaboratively developed by my staff and Sodexo. This menu contains new concepts, such as demonstration cooking, and is designed to address the preferences and needs of today's young marines.

GFS: *Is the Marine Corps currently putting any consideration to contracting out its Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) foodservice operations?*

Weeks: No, not at this time.

GFS: *What is the current situation for those non-contracted-out OCONUS garrison foodservice operations? Are any changes on the horizon for these locations?*

Weeks: There are potential changes on the horizon with the movement of forces from Okinawa to Guam, but it is still too early to give any specifics.



DOD PHOTO BY: LANCE CPL CHRISTOPHER G. GRAHAM, USMC

U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) Food Service Specialist Lance Cpl. Rodolfo Guarec removes fresh-cooked chicken from an insulated food container as he prepares to serve evening chow at Camp Matilda, Kuwait, during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

GFS: Have any new training opportunities for Marine Corps culinary specialists (CSs) been added recently? What routes are available for marines to improve their culinary skills these days?

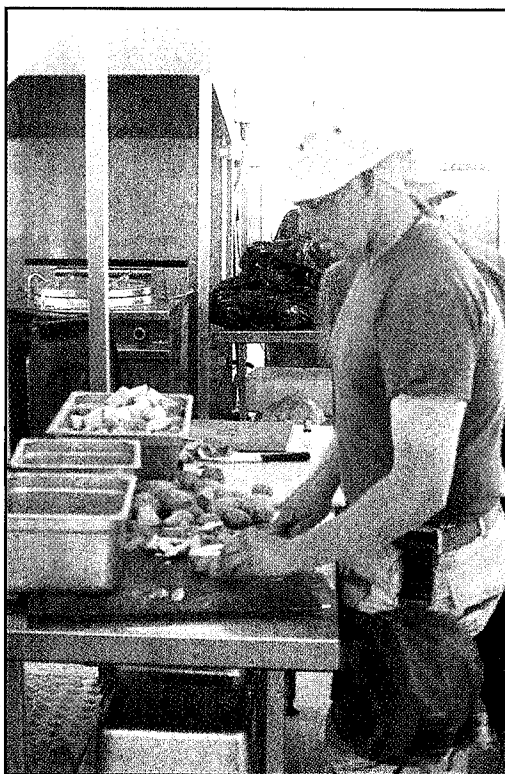
Weeks: We recently received approval and funding for our marines to attend the five-week Pro Chef Advanced Culinary Arts courses held at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA). Our allocations are limited, so we are offering course attendance as a reward to our marines that achieve Chef of the Quarter at their installation level.

GFS: You have mentioned that several methods are used to assure food quality and patron satisfaction in Marine Corps mess halls. Do the quality assurance (QA) evaluations ever turn up anything amiss or any practices that need to be corrected? How do the marines who dine in the halls rate the food and the service in patron surveys? How often do new products make their way to the table?

Weeks: In CONUS mess halls under the regional contracts, Sodexho manages a quality control program that includes HACCP — Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point — management controls and patron surveys. The Marine Corps conducts random quality assurance evaluations that effectively and systematically monitor contractor performance. We work closely with Sodexho in this area to ensure quality products and services. New products are brought in routinely, particularly during master menu revisions.

GFS: A couple of years ago, the Marine Corps Food Service Director told us that ultimately, about 40 percent of the CONUS menu would consist of advance-prepared foods, though that would be transparent to the customer. Has it reached that level yet? About how much of the menu is based on advance-prepared foods at this point?

Weeks: Although a specific percentage is difficult to quantify, I believe that overall, we have reached the 40-percent level. The new CONUS-wide Master Menu contains numerous items that are prepared using advance technology, and we incorporated many quality pre-prepared products. The labor savings we achieve allow us to add quality to the menu without affecting cost. Response to the new menu has been very favorable so far.



U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) Food Service Specialist Cpl. Eric Kenyon, prepares Russet potatoes to be served with sirloin steak, as a surprise for the evening chow at Camp Matilda, Kuwait, during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

DOD PHOTO BY LANCE CPL CHRISTOPHER G. GRAHAM, USMC

GFS: What is the status of the Field Food Service Study and Analysis (S&A) you mentioned in last year's commander's update? Has the study been conducted yet? Is the analysis complete? Have any new initiatives been developed as a result? If so, how have Marine Corps field foodservice operations improved?

Weeks: The S&A was completed on Jan. 31, 2007, and the results are currently under review at Installations and Logistics, Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC).

GFS: What is on the horizon for Marine Corps food service? Are there any other new programs for improving foodservice operations on the drawing board?

Weeks: A key area that we plan to concentrate on during the next several months is ensuring that our doctrinal publications reflect the numerous improvements that have been made over the past few years. We are in the final stages

of drafting our new Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) Manual for the Marine Corps Food Service/ Subsistence Program (MCO P10110.14) and updating the Marine Corps Field Feeding Program reference publication (MCRP 4-11.8). These two publications are the primary foodservice references utilized by all Marine Corps commands in the proper management of their foodservice and subsistence programs, and are long overdue for an update.

GFS: How many foodservice personnel from the Marine Corps will be sent to the Defense Supply Center Philadelphia (DSCP) worldwide conference in June? Will there be other events where Marine Corps foodservice specialists will train? If so, where, when — and can Government Food Service participate? For instance, will the Marine Corps attend such events as the National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show in Chicago, Ill., and National Association of Food Equipment Manufacturers (NAFEM) in the fall?

Weeks: Usually we have an average of 100 marines that attend the DSCP conference. We also have marines that attend the NRA and NAFEM, but no idea how many and exactly what training the individual marines will be participating in. Maybe we can discuss this at the International Food Service Executives Association (IFSEA) conference in Kansas City.